

FOREWORD

Since the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission was created more than a half century ago, our state has seen its wild turkey populations restored, anadromous striped bass populations stabilized, the return of bald eagles to the skies, more than two million acres of wildlife habitat conserved, and opportunities for fishing, hunting and wildlife-watching expanded to include North Carolinians of all abilities.

Tasked with creating more sporting opportunities for more people as rapid human population growth has changed the face of the state, the Commission has met this challenge in both rural and urban settings, and even expanded its work from a traditional game animal focus to embrace conservation of all species.

New research, new technology, and new management principles and philosophies have provided the basis for a growing emphasis on the sustainability of all of our state's wildlife resources.

But conservation challenges remain, and so I am honored to introduce the Commission's latest and most innovative effort to serve as responsible stewards of our state's wildlife resources: the North Carolina Wildlife Action Plan.

Developed in compliance with a Congressional mandate, the Plan is the Commission's blueprint for fish and wildlife conservation statewide for the next half century, providing guidance and assistance to other conservation-minded agencies, organizations, industries, academics and individuals.

The Plan builds on all of the conservation efforts that have come before, and it is strengthened by concurrent conservation strategies being implemented by other states across the nation. The Plan proposes a cost-effective, proactive approach to the conservation of entire communities, including those often overlooked fish and wildlife species for which management opportunities were traditionally under-funded.

It is an ambitious Plan, calling for the conservation of a wide array of aquatic and terrestrial species and their associated habitats.

It is a forward-looking Plan, anticipating new management strategies yet to be developed to meet the conservation challenges created by continued growth and diversity in the state's human population.

It is a comprehensive Plan for fish and wildlife, whose success will not be measured by population estimates or growth rates, but by the cultivation of lasting conservation partnerships and by the promise of fish and wildlife resources for future North Carolinians.

John E. Pechmann
Chairman
North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission